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Panagakos, George; Psaraftis, Harilaos N.

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Lessons on multi-level governance learned from the bottom-up corridor projects in the Baltic Sea Region

George Panagakos a*, Harilaos N. Psaraftis a

aTechnical University of Denmark, Dep. of Management Engineering, Produktionstorvet, Building 424, 2800 Kongens Lyngby, Denmark

Abstract

Since their introduction in 2013, the TEN-T core network corridors (CNCs) comprise the main implementation instrument for the EU transport infrastructure policy. In addition to three CNCs that cross the Baltic Sea Region, a number of bottom-up corridor projects have proliferated in this area. Most of these projects perceive transport corridors as a vehicle for strengthening economic and social cohesion and development through the promotion of cross-border trans-regional cooperation. In doing so, they have developed a number of different stakeholder cooperation schemes. Drawing on desk research and a series of interviews, the paper reviews the stakeholder management schemes that past corridor projects have designed, implemented or tested and maps the decision-making processes concerning stakeholder involvement. Special emphasis is placed on the engagement of businesses (manufacturing, transport and logistics industry) and the so-called lighter-weight players (smaller and rural regions/municipalities, NGOs and SMEs), which have been diagnosed as the least active in the CNC work.

Keywords: Transport corridors; Multi-level governance; Stakeholder involvement; TEN-T core network corridors; Baltic Sea Region.

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +45 45 25 65 14.
E-mail address: geopan@dtu.dk

LESSONS ON MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE LEARNED FROM THE BOTTOM-UP CORRIDOR PROJECTS IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION

1. Introduction

Aiming at removing physical, technical, operational and administrative bottlenecks along the major transport axes across Europe, the core network corridors (CNCs) were introduced in 2013 as an instrument for the coordinated implementation of the EU transport infrastructure policy. Three of the nine CNCs that comprise the entire EU core network cross the Baltic Sea Region (BSR): the Scandinavian-Mediterranean, North Sea-Baltic and Baltic-Adriatic corridors. The implementation of these three CNCs, planned to be completed by 2030, has a large but untapped potential to stimulate positive effects in the region beyond the pure transport sector and beyond the immediate geographical areas they cross. The TENTacle project, co-funded by the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme 2014-2020, aims at assisting stakeholders in the BSR to materialize gains in prosperity, sustainable growth and territorial cohesion generated by the implementation of the CNCs in this part of Europe.

One of the TENTacle activities, entitled ‘Lessons learned,’ supports the CNC implementation practice by transferring experience in multi-level governance (MLG) accumulated through the numerous bottom-up corridor projects that have proliferated in the region. The present paper summarizes the work performed and the results achieved under this activity. More specifically, the paper reviews the stakeholder management schemes that past corridor projects have designed, implemented or tested and maps the decision-making processes concerning the involvement of specific categories of stakeholders. Special attention is given to the engagement of businesses and the so-called lighter-weight players, which have been diagnosed as the least active in the CNC work due to limited resource availability.

Desk research on the documents produced by corridor projects in the BSR, combined with interviews with a number of individuals involved in managing either the projects themselves or the corresponding corridor governance structures, has been deployed as the investigation method. The results presented here also include the feedback received through a workshop organized by the Swedish Transport Administration in Malmö on 23 May 2017 to discuss accumulated experience with targeted stakeholders.

The paper consists of five sections. To set the scene, Section 2 presents major findings of selected scientific literature on corridor planning and governance. Section 3 focuses on the major contributions of six exemplary corridor projects in relation to multi-level governance. Section 4 looks into the issues of stakeholder composition and presents the feedback received through a purposely-built questionnaire. It also discusses measures supporting the participation of market and lighter-weight players. Closing remarks form the last section of the paper.

2. Selected scientific results

In the recent past, infrastructure corridors gained recognition as a useful network structure in freight transportation when they offered a solution to the congested (due to containerization) European ports by channeling freight to the hinterland (Witte et al., 2013). In fact, the need to address the significant institutional and technical fragmentation of the European transport industry soon added an institutional side to the functional role of the corridor concept (Priemus and Zonneveld, 2003).

In the early 1990s, the meaning of the corridor concept was further broadened on the assumption that enhanced connectivity stimulates the economic performance of lagging regions. As such, the corridor concept was explicitly linked to the EU cohesion agenda and became a comprehensive planning tool. Thus, corridors are now considered as a multi-dimensional affair, striving to integrate a number of sectoral policies including the transport, housing, economic, agricultural and environmental ones (Witte et al., 2013).

It is true that corridors contrast main objectives of traditional spatial planning, such as the preservation of open spaces and the realization of compact cities. However, the areas in which corridor development takes place are spatially and institutionally too complex to be dealt with by the traditional command-and-control planning. Besides crossing national borders, they also cross numerous local and regional administrative borders, all of which correspond to specific responsibilities (de Vries and Priemus, 2003). The inclusion of an extra layer of governance

by the EU, which scaled policy making for major infrastructure upwards while weakening national and regional spatial planning (Marshall, 2014), has added to this complexity.

It follows that corridor development requires coordination improvement at different levels: (i) between different policy sectors and segments of society; (ii) between public and private organizations; (iii) at the cross-border level; and (iv) between central and local governments. This is easier said than done. Multi-level governance (MLG) is the scheme that offers the necessary flexibility. To describe it, we borrow the definition that de Vries and Priemus (2003) use for 'heterarchy;' the "self-organized steering of multiple agencies, institutions, and systems which are operationally autonomous from one another yet structurally coupled due to their mutual interdependence."

The recent focus on sustainability reinforces this necessity. The reconciliation of pushing against the planetary boundaries, mounting social pressures and the need to maintain economic growth requires transformational rather than incremental progress (EEA, 2015). Transformation or transition researchers have developed a variety of theories to explain how complex socio-technical systems can be reorganized to deliver better outcomes (Markard et al., 2012). However, all of them acknowledge the fact that successful changes require the coordination of resources across diverse interdependent actors, leading to multi-level governance (Smith et al., 2005).

Along these lines, AtKisson (2016) suggests the following steps to encourage society-wide transformation towards sustainability:

- Use top-down actions to foster the expansion of bottom-up innovations and alliances between players;
- Support the creation, clustering and scaling up of good practices or 'niches' for transformation;
- Change mind sets and behaviors to create the conditions that enable change on a wide scale;
- Harness the potential of technology to facilitate and accelerate transformation.

The role of diverse stakeholders is officially acknowledged by Regulation (EU) No 1315/2013, which established Union guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network (TEN-T) and introduced the concept of core network corridors. According to Article 50 ('Engagement with public and private stakeholders'), projects of common interest relate to all directly concerned stakeholders, which may include regional and local authorities, managers and users of infrastructure as well as industry and civil society in addition to Member States. The designation of a European Coordinator for each CNC signals the importance that the Commission places on the need for a coordinated implementation (Article 45). Furthermore, the European Coordinator is assisted by the Corridor Forum, a consultative body of stakeholders established and chaired by the Coordinator in agreement with the Member States concerned (Article 46). Moreover, the Coordinator may set up and chair corridor-specific working groups focusing on modal integration, interoperability, and the coordinated development of infrastructure in cross-border sections (Article 46), while the possibility to consult any stakeholder in relation to the work plan and its implementation is foreseen by Article 45, always with the agreement of the Member States concerned.

Within this framework, we reviewed the work plans of the three BSR-related core network corridors, the Motorways of the Sea initiative and the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). All these documents consider stakeholder support as a vital element for the successful implementation of transport policy. Hence, one can conclude that the intentions are in place. It is up to the stakeholders concerned to turn them into reality.

3. Selected projects and multi-level governance structures

Twelve projects exhibiting interesting MLG elements were analyzed in the course of the project. The selection has been based on the nature of the projects, the availability of their output and the readiness of their management to respond to our inquiries. Due to space limitations, only six of them are briefly presented here. They have all been supported by EU funds. The first two are horizontal projects in the sense that they concern corridor governance in general. The other four relate to specific corridors and each one has deployed a different MLG structure.

3.1. TransBaltic

TransBaltic (2009-2012) was a transnational project on transport and regional growth led by the Swedish region of Skåne in cooperation with other regional authorities, research institutions, transport operators, logistics associations and several pan-Baltic organizations. Its general objective was to provide incentives for a sustainable multimodal transport system in the BSR, by means of dedicated policy measures and boosted business models. Its main output was the Macroregional Transport Action Plan (MTAP), which later on was updated in the framework

of the TransBaltic Extension (2013-2014) project (https://www.ladec.fi/filebank/3157-TransBaltic_MTAP_2014_edition.pdf).

The MTAP was revolutionary in the sense that it promoted a system/network approach to the shaping of transport connections in the BSR even before the advent of the CNCs. Developed by the regional level authorities, the MTAP complemented the intergovernmental efforts of the EUSBSR by promoting a system thinking that paid attention to insufficiently addressed thematic domains, like organization, coordination and management, qualifications and skills, and ICT applications.

Multi-level governance was a central theme of the MTAP. In addition to MLG elements found in most of its proposed actions, two of the 21 MTAP actions relate directly to multi-level governance: (i) consolidate sustainable transport development initiatives of the regional communities and (ii) establish governance structures for transnational transport corridors. The project placed emphasis on the lack of mechanisms feeding the results of the region's territorial cooperation projects to the relevant national transport planning processes.

3.2. BSR TransGovernance

The BSR TransGovernance project (2013-2014) was a direct descendant of the TransBaltic project presented above and the Scandria and EWTC II projects that follow. Its objective was to demonstrate how multi-level governance models, tools and approaches contribute to a better alignment of transport policies in the BSR at various administrative levels.

The project defined four reference scales that have witnessed cross-border cooperation of public/private stakeholders: (i) the MACRO scale relating to the entire BSR area, (ii) the MESO scale concerning cross-border integration areas with high intensity of passenger and goods exchange, (iii) the CORRIDOR scale implying the transnational multimodal corridors crossing the BSR, and (iv) the MICRO scale involving specific intermodal terminals. A small number of showcase examples were analyzed in each scale to demonstrate practical benefits of the stakeholder management processes deployed (http://www.transgovernance.eu/media/436426/ok_final_report_bsr_transgov_141023.pdf).

The MLG structures examined vary to match the specific characteristics of each case. However, a few elements tend to appear more often than others do. They include: (i) a well-defined leadership, (ii) setting of a vision/strategy for corridor development, (iii) mobilization of relevant public and private stakeholders and identification of their expectations, (iv) establishment of an appropriate stakeholder platform, (v) focus on a limited number of measures according to stakeholder priorities, (vi) definition of clear roles and responsibilities for all parties involved, (vii) provision of a transparent channel for information flows among stakeholders, and (viii) establishment of a progress monitoring mechanism leading to adjustments if necessary. At the MACRO scale, the low commitment of national authorities to the results of territorial cooperation projects, identified already by TransBaltic, was confirmed and a better information flow was suggested both vertically (across different governance levels) and horizontally (across national planning authorities of BSR states).

3.3. Scandria® corridor

The Scandria® corridor is a political initiative of regions and municipalities located on the shortest transport axis between Scandinavia and the Adriatic Sea. It aims to improve efficiency and sustainability of transport in the corridor and to generate regional added value in the associated regions. Inaugurated in 2007 with the so-called 'Berlin Declaration' that provided the necessary political backing, the initiative has been realized through a number of Interreg projects. One of them, Scandria (2009-2012), resulted in an Action Programme on the development of the Scandria® corridor that contains a 2030 vision and action proposals.

In the framework of the BSR TransGovernance project mentioned above, the Scandria® corridor initiative organized a series of regional and thematic workshops. It made an inventory of relevant cross-border initiatives and investigated possible organizational models sustaining stakeholder cooperation. Major governance gaps between national and regional, as well as between administrative and business stakeholders were identified. Favoring flexible cooperation structures that allow the adjustment of activities according to needs, Scandria is against new structures that duplicate or counteract existing top-down mechanisms like the CNC corridor fora. Instead, it suggests complementing them with a bottom-up regional perspective (Neumüller and Friedrich, 2014).

The MLG model suggested for the Scandria® corridor is the Scandria® Alliance, a platform supported by thematic working groups. An agreement-based cooperation between regional stakeholders is proposed, offering opportunities to involve other stakeholders like private businesses. It would be tasked to define political and operative objectives, develop project initiatives and coordinate activities of cross-border/urban node initiatives along the Scandria® corridor. The Alliance would be composed by a decision making body and an operative scheme, designed as a one-stop agency. Initially two thematic working groups are foreseen (on intermodal logistics and alternative fuels). An annual corridor conference would be the political event serving the dialogue with national and European level stakeholders. A web-based communication platform (www.scandria-corridor.eu) already provides a channel for efficient and transparent information flows. The advancement of the Scandria® Alliance formation and the cooperation in the thematic areas of intermodal logistics and alternative fuels are the focal points of the ongoing follow-up project Scandria2Act.

3.4. East-West Transport Corridor

The East–West Transport Corridor (EWTC) is an international multimodal freight corridor stretching from Esbjerg (DK) to Vilnius (LT). From there, the corridor connects eastwards to China and westwards to Belgium – thus serving as a modern ‘silk way’ between Asia and Europe through the Baltic Sea Region. In 2006, 42 partners from Denmark, Lithuania, Russia and Sweden joined forces to strengthen transportation development along the EWTC through infrastructure improvements, new solutions for business in logistics, and cooperation between stakeholders. The success of EWTC led to the follow up project EWTC II (2009-2012), which aimed at transforming the EWTC into a green corridor in line with the EU policy. The project placed particular emphasis on the long-term cooperation among the corridor’s stakeholders and in 2010, the EWTC Association (EWTCA) was established to stimulate business opportunities along the corridor and promote the EWTC brand. In addition to strengthening liaison between its partners, EWTCA assists in the application of green transport innovations and new technologies, and represents partner interests in national and international fora. Its membership covers 13 countries and comprises primarily of transport-related businesses and associations. Some universities and regional authorities participate, too.

EWTCA, which received technical and financial assistance via the EWTC II project during its first two years, is now self-financed relying exclusively on membership fees. There are no legally binding partner commitments to the Association, which is managed by its General Assembly, the Association Council, the President, two Vice-Presidents (one for Europe and one for Asia) and the Secretariat headed by the General Secretary. Activities are defined in a 4-year Action Plan, resulting from a priorities survey among members. The EWTCA appears in the BESTFACT database as a best practice in the area of ‘Green Logistics and Co-Modality.’

3.5. CETC-ROUTE65

The CETC-ROUTE65 corridor runs from Skåne (Southern Sweden) to the Adriatic Sea through the Baltic Sea (Ystad – Świnoujście) and Central Europe (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Croatia). The initiative aims to develop a system of multimodal infrastructure and economic links that enhance the region’s competitiveness and generate sustainable growth. It was initiated in 2004 as an agreement between six regions from four countries. By 2010, the signatories to the agreement had increased to 17 partners from six countries. In the same year, the Transport Ministers of these six countries jointly declared their will to promote the development of CETC-ROUTE65 as a green corridor and to support joint initiatives and projects that enhance the economic development of the relevant regions. CETC-ROUTE65 was managed by an Interregional Steering Committee, chaired by a different partner every six months, and was supported by a technical secretariat based in Szczecin, Poland (Marshall’s Office of the West Pomeranian Region).

What differentiates CETC-ROUTE65 from the other corridor projects is the May 2010 decision of 14 partner regions to alter the form of partnership and establish a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC). The EGTC is a European legal instrument that enables public authorities of various Member States to team up and deliver joint services, without requiring a prior international agreement to be signed and ratified by national parliaments. Setting up an EGTC, however, requires considerable bureaucratic effort. The CETC-EGTC Ltd. was officially registered in March 2014, almost four years after taking the initial decision. On the other hand, the new management structure separated the CETC secretariat from the politics and capacities of the Marshall’s office and strengthened its effectiveness in the race against competing north-south corridors. Moreover, the legal personality

offered by the EGTC status facilitates the participation of partner regions in national and international projects, thus, supporting their financial health. In 2015, a Strategic Centre was established as an internal organizational unit of the CETC-EGTC Ltd. to assist partner regions with their analysis and strategic planning work.

3.6. Midway Alignment of the Bothnian Corridor

The Midway Alignment of the Bothnian Corridor differs from the projects presented so far in two distinct ways. Firstly, this is the only project in this section that is not funded by the Interreg Programme. Instead, it has been financed by municipal, regional and national Finnish and Swedish funds, private companies and the EU Motorways of the Sea (MoS) facility of the TEN-T funds. It aims at upgrading the existing maritime link between Vasa (FI) and Umeå (SE) by deploying a new-built, preferably LNG-driven, ferry with icebreaking capacity that would secure a reliable year-round service. The MoS project (2012-2015) comprised the first phase of the development and included the preparatory activities and feasibility studies. The implementation phase, originally scheduled for 2015-2017, might be delayed due to the need to combine financial sources across the border.

The second aspect that makes this case noteworthy relates to the governance structure deployed. In 2012, the two major stakeholders concerned, the cities of Vasa and Umeå, formed a jointly owned private company (NLC Ferry Ab Oy) for running the shipping operations. In comparison to the EGTC scheme, a private company provides an equally strong legal personality without the red tape of the former structure. On the other hand, it is applicable only in cases of a very narrow scope and aligned interests. It is worth mentioning that the scheme was constrained to the two cities, excluding many other public and private stakeholders of the project. Its combination with some other governance structure of more general use is, thus, often required.

4. Stakeholder input

The section presents the main points of the stakeholder feedback received through a survey and a workshop especially organized for this purpose. The project team compiled an initial list of 23 potentially interesting cases that included all related past projects in the BSR, as well as recent initiatives like the Swedish Transport Administration strategic choice study ('åtgärdsvalsstudie' in Swedish) on the Stockholm-Oslo rail corridor. Following a first round of desk research, 17 projects/initiatives were selected for further examination based on the nature of the projects and the availability of their output. A questionnaire on corridor governance issues was designed, tested, and circulated among individuals involved in managing these projects and/or their stakeholder management structures. A total of 13 replies, representing 11 of the recipient projects, were received after two rounds of follow-up communications.

The questionnaire consisted of three main parts covering project design, stakeholder issues and project impact respectively. In general, stakeholders are involved either in the phase of project design, in which case they enter as project partners or associated organizations, or in the phase of project implementation, when they are mobilized through project activities (meetings, workshops, seminars, conferences, etc.). For the purposes of the analysis, they are classified in five groups (industry, networks, public sector, academia and other interests) comprising of 23 categories in total. The stakeholder categories and the corresponding frequencies of engagement in project partnership appear in Fig. 1(A).

The public sector appears to be the most popular stakeholder group, followed by industry and academia. Regional authorities feature as project partners in 10 out of 11 projects, which is not surprising given that 8 of these 11 projects are co-financed by the Interreg programme. The only project that does not have a regional authority as partner is a research project of FP7. It is interesting to note that no official institutions at national level or above participate as partners in any of these projects. With a frequency of 8/11, the terminal/port operators feature at the top of the industrial group and at the second most popular position overall. Neither this result comes as a surprise given the geographical focus of the analysis on the Baltic Sea Region. The modest frequency of shippers (4/11) is lower than expected given their significance in freight transportation. Also noteworthy is the very low score of networks, where only business associations make their presence visible (3/11). Stakeholder participation as associated organizations exhibits a more balanced frequency profile. The EU institutions, and national parliaments and governments are actively mobilized through other project activities. The same applies to consultants, who avoid getting involved in project partnership due to the co-financing requirement.

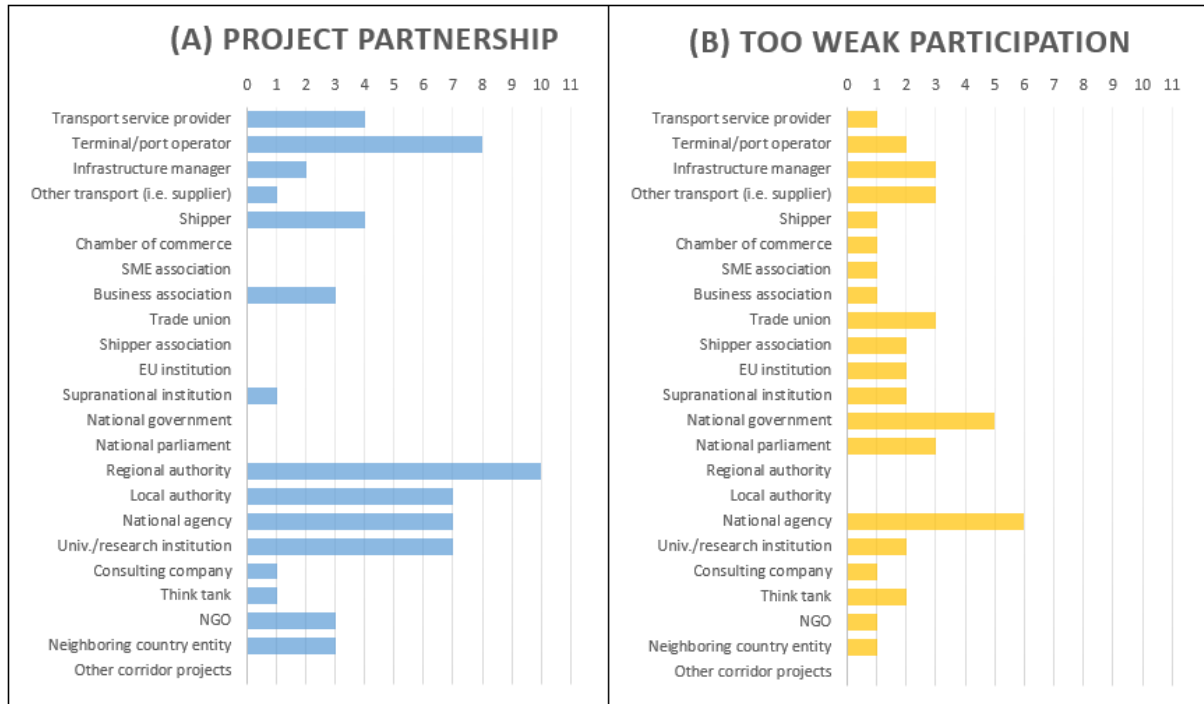


Fig. 1 Stakeholder composition and strength of representation

In relation to the adequacy of the representation of participating stakeholders, Fig. 1(B) shows that national agencies and governments fail to meet expectations more often than others do. The need to stay neutral, as well as capacity and budget restrictions, have been reported as the main causes for the weak involvement of national governments. An additional problem is faced by national agencies, which have to represent the national (governmental) point of view on top of expressing their own views.

In terms of the MLG structures deployed, popularity appears to be inversely proportional to the degree of binding that each type of structure offers. As Fig. 2(A) shows, the most binding EGTC scheme has been applied in only one project, whereas five projects have selected less binding cooperation frameworks like strategic alliances or associations. With seven applications, the non-binding arrangements (e.g. collaboration platforms or thematic working groups) comprise the most popular category. The Midway Alignment project of Section 3.6, involving the binding formation of a joint state-owned company, is the arrangement appearing under the 'Other' option.

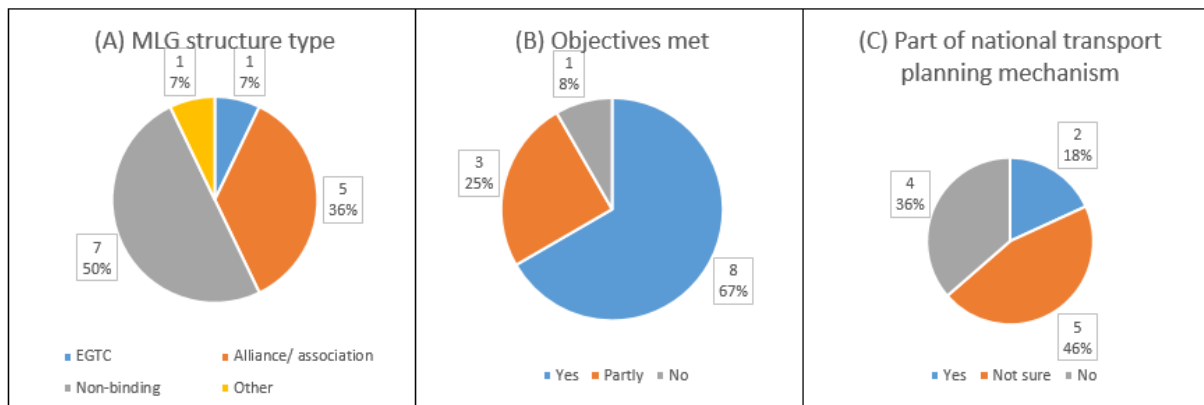


Fig. 2 Governance schemes, effectiveness and project impact on national transport planning

Four issues, identified in past projects as success factors, entered the project design part of the questionnaire. They concern the political support, the compatibility between project objectives and actions, the clear definition of stakeholder benefits and the provision of sufficient time for generating knowledge and engaging all stakeholders. Space limitations do not permit the graphical depiction of the results. The general pattern, however, calls for a

positive answer in about three fourths of the total, the remaining consisting mainly of partly positive responses. It is worth mentioning that all hesitations concerning political support relate to horizontal projects, whereas corridor-specific projects seem to enjoy full political backing. Conflicts between objectives and actions/priorities were identified in only two projects. Over-specification of planned actions led to implementation problems in one occasion, whereas another project reported partners with agendas slightly different to that of the project. Although no project suffered from vague or unrealistic benefits, there were references to diverse stakeholder benefits and different perceptions of benefits in the beginning and at the end of the project. Timing problems with regard to either external developments or delayed project initiation, as well as reservations due to dissemination difficulties after the formal project lifespan, were expressed in relation to project duration.

A second group of questions relates to stakeholder issues and more specifically to how well their roles and responsibilities have been defined, their compatibility with the stakeholders' mandate and priorities, their firm commitment and the availability of financial and human resources. As a general pattern, positive answers account for two thirds of the total. Problems encountered concern initially sketchy responsibilities that had to be better defined during project execution, as well as the lack of familiarity of some partners with international projects imposing extra load on others. In relation to conflicting mandates, two projects reported problems with partners having an intermediary role on top of their own calling for greater coordination within the partner boundaries. Commitment problems were experienced by two projects either during project execution or after its conclusion when the adoption of project results can foster daily business. The case of partners who happened to realize during project implementation that the available project funds were intended only for assessing potential future infrastructure works and not for implementation troubled one of the projects, whereas another one related funds availability to the nationality of the partner. Difficulties in collecting membership fees have also been reported. As for the availability of human resources, three projects complained that often partner institutions do not assign the right people to project activities, probably due to undeservedly low perception of Interreg projects.

The two-thirds pattern mentioned above also applies to the question on whether the project succeeded in meeting its objectives – Fig. 2(B). The major concern of the projects relates to their failure to achieve the expected outcome despite having, in most cases, delivered the foreseen output. They report very good performance in fostering public/private sector cooperation, building trust among stakeholders, contributing to corridor branding and attracting new project funds. Furthermore, their results have been considered by the national transport planning and regional development authorities in more than two thirds of the cases. Almost half of the managers see a possible contribution to the formation of the EU transport policy and the EUSBSR. Yet, as Fig. 2(C) shows, when prompted to assess if their MLG schemes have been acknowledged as part of the national transport planning mechanism, only two respondents answered positively, confirming the TransBaltic position of Section 3.1. One project suggested the establishment of official cross-border authorities to 'get things done,' while another one stressed the importance of the CNC Corridor Fora in the European transport development. The projects' impact on the general public behavior exhibits an even gloomier view, leaving much room for improvement.

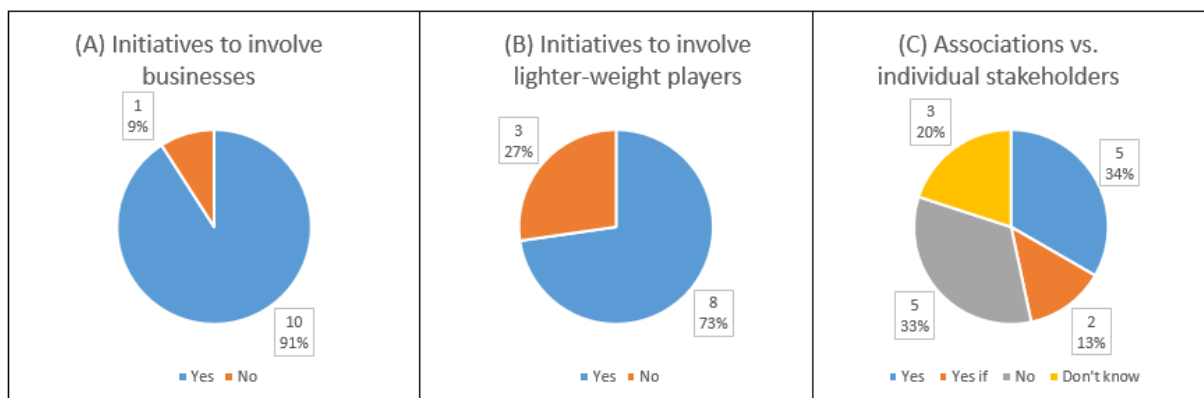


Fig. 3 Initiatives to involve market and lighter-weight players and attitude towards associations

Fig. 3(A) illustrates the overwhelmingly positive responses received when respondents were asked to indicate if their projects included a particular initiative to involve market representatives. It is worth noting that the only negative response came from a project that, despite having no market representatives in their structure, was coordinated by the Small Business Center of a University. Among the 10 positive answers, four describe these

initiatives as special meetings organized by the projects, where market representatives were invited to express their views and priorities. All others refer to the involvement of business interests directly into the project partnership. Having in mind the five levels of public participation identified by Petersen et al. (2009):

Level 1. Information provision: one-way process informing the businesses with an interest on the subject;

Level 2. Consultation: stakeholder views are solicited through project activities and feed project output;

Level 3. Deciding together: the stakeholders are directly involved in decision-making;

Level 4. Acting together: the stakeholders are also involved in the implementation phase; and

Level 5. Supporting independent business groups: enable interest groups to develop their own strategies, one can conclude that all of the 11 projects examined provide participation opportunities to businesses up to Level 2, eight of them reach Level 3 by involving market representatives in their partnership, four engage businesses in the implementation phase (Level 4), and only one project offers to business groups the Level 5 opportunity to develop their own strategy (refer to Section 3.4 on how EWTCa defines their 4-year Action Plan).

Albeit still significant, the participation of lighter-weight players (smaller and rural regions/municipalities, NGOs and SMEs) is less profound – Fig. 3(B). A usual way of involving stakeholders of this category is through their associations. When asked to compare associations to individual stakeholders in terms of benefits produced, the respondents came up with the mixed results of Fig. 3(C). One third argue that nobody knows the needs of an SME better than themselves, whereas another third reply that, since the stakeholders of this sort do not have the resources required for an active participation, their collective representation is the second best solution. Two more respondents share this view provided that the position of the association is formally supported by their members.

The literature provides successful examples of collective action in corridor work. The FehmarnBelt Business Council (FBBC) is such an initiative. It is an international union of chambers and business associations from Denmark, Germany and Sweden on the axis Hamburg - Lübeck - Copenhagen - Malmö. In addition to promoting the FehmarnBelt fixed link, it aims at bringing the benefits of this new infrastructure directly to the region and its businesses. The formation of specialized interest groups within an association, as is the Baltic Sea Business Network of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Southern Sweden (a FBBC member), is also a possibility. The technical and financial support that the EU provides to clusters is another route worth investigating.

The feedback received from targeted stakeholders when presented with the preliminary findings of the project are summarized as follows:

- WHO
 - The participation of shippers should be more actively pursued to complement that of transport operators and logistics companies
- WHAT
 - Focus the dialogue with market and lighter-weight players on their needs (what the corridor can do for them) rather than on general policy issues
- HOW
 - Prepare a stakeholder involvement strategy
 - Use existing groups to involve smaller players but tell them why and allow real dialogue
 - Narrow sectoral group meetings and round tables (max. 10-15 participants) may be more productive than open events
 - Interview selected stakeholders instead of inviting them to meetings.

5. Closing remarks

The paper has presented the most important issues on MLG identified through reviewing selected literature and documents produced by bottom up corridor projects in the BSR. In order to add more value, an effort was made to report problems that troubled past projects. The following three issues require special attention. *Firstly*, MLG is an indispensable tool when it comes to corridor governance, requiring coordination across different levels of authority, across different sectors and across different countries. However, no scheme exists that would fit all situations. Actually, its existence would have contradicted the very nature of MLG, which is devised to reconcile a multiplicity of different interests each time. Table 1 summarizes the types, basic characteristics, pros and cons of all MLG structures that have been deployed in the past. The selection among them will depend on factors like the objectives pursued, the time horizon, the flexibility requirements, the need for political support, etc. *Secondly*, the paper confirmed the finding of previous projects on the limited impact the region's territorial cooperation projects have had on the national transport planning processes. More importantly, however, it identified the limited impact that these projects have had towards affecting the behavior of the general public. It is conceivable that more

effective public awareness campaigns would improve the participation of market and lighter-weight players, attract the attention of politicians and enhance the responsiveness of the national planning authorities. After all, it is the openness and inclusiveness of the institutions that determine the success of the nations (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012). *Finally*, there is an imperative need for a central, official, openly accessed depository of all documents produced by corridor projects in the BSR in order to ensure that their results remain available for future use.

Table 1. Types of multi-level governance structures (based on Neumüller and Friedrich, 2014)

Type	Definition	Advantages	Disadvantages
Informal network, thematic groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonbinding network of various stakeholders without written agreement • Cooperation on demand • One stakeholder leading the process voluntarily 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low administrative effort • Fast formation and working process • Flexibility in partnership • Flexibility in setting the agenda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open regulations for cooperation • Risk of low obligation/commitment of partners • Insecure financing (depending on partner commitment or the acquisition of external funds)
Agreement based cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation based on written internal agreement • Fixed financial contributions • Formal executive scheme • Action plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger commitment of partners • Financial security • Minimum staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires partner consensus • Limited flexibility (e.g. additional tasks have to be negotiated at political level)
EGTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on Regulation (EC) No. 1082/2006, Regulation (EU) No 1302/2013 and national laws of head office country • Own legal personality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiating power • Enhanced visibility • Eligible for EU funds • Well defined decision making & roles • Independence from political developments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considerable bureaucratic effort to set up • Difficulties in the involvement of private entities as members
Private company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National laws of head office country • Own legal personality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All of the EGTC advantages (see above) • Minimum effort to set up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only for cases of narrow scope and identical interests • Non eligible for funding from EU territorial cooperation schemes

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